

Japan-USA: Musical Perspectives

Series 5

Sunday, March 16, 2014, 4pm
Tenri Cultural Institute of New York



Merzouga Sun and Moon by Hiroko Ohno

About Our Group, JUMP

We wish to express our gratitude to the Tenri Institute for allowing us to use their space for the fifth concert in our series and to Globus Washitsu for their hospitality. We also would like to thank all of you for coming.

JUMP (Japan-USA: Musical Perspectives) is a composers' collective, created for the purpose of organizing a series of contemporary music concerts both in the US and in Japan. We present experimental works, collaborating with active contemporary artists and musicians. We seek to expand cultural exchange between Japan and the US through music and arts.

In our first two concerts we focused on works that involved computers and technology. For the third and fourth concerts, in addition to technology, we have made connections with visual art. Our fifth concert also makes connections to visual art (see the painting and photo on display) and features music composed or cello and Japanese traditional instruments such as the koto, shamisen, and shakuhachi.

Searching for beauty in my music is an endlessly fascinating subject for me as a composer. What is *beauty*? *Beauty* is very personal. For me it does not mean 'external beauty', but all of the ugly, fearful, sad, and crazy things that live inside of us. I believe that internal beauty, and not only the outward appearances, attracts people. I very much hope that you will experience this kind of beauty through our work.

It is very important for composers to receive feedback from the audience. Please, feel free to talk to the composers and musicians after the performance.

Miyuki ITO, Founder

JUMP, Series 5

Tenri Cultural Institute of New York

Lyudmila GERMAN: *Red Snail on the Snow* (2014) for koto and cello *

Miyuki ITO: *Fading Beauty... (3)* (2014) for shakuhachi**, shamisen and cello *
/ Painting, *Merzouga Sun and Moon* by Hiroko Ohno

James Nyoraku SCHLEFER: *Full-Out Stillness* (2014) for shakuhachi**, koto and cello *

Intermission

Marty REGAN: *Forest Whispers...* (2008) for shakuhachi*** and cello

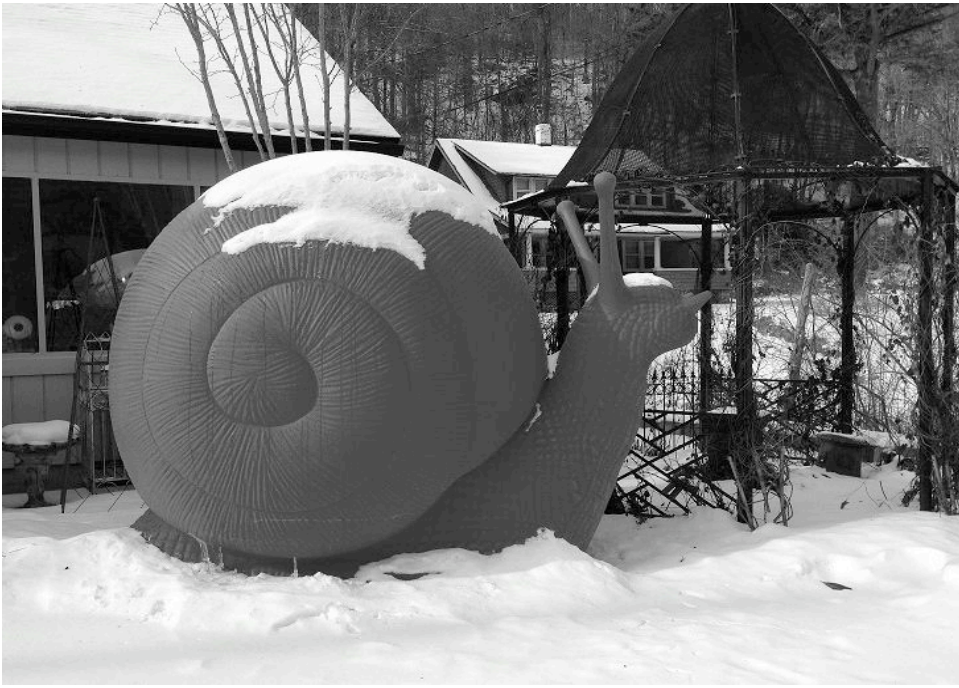
Minoru MIKI: *Honju* (1974) for shamisen

Noriyasu TANAKA: *Moment of Consonance* (2014) for shakuhachi**, koto and cello *

* World premiere

** James Nyoraku Schlefer, shakuhachi
Yoko Reikano Kimura, koto and shamisen
Hikaru Tamaki, cello

***Marty Regan, shakuhachi



Red Snail on the Snow (2014) for koto and cello by **Lyudmila German**

While *Red Snail on the Snow* seems like a title of a children's fiction book, it was a very real (if a little surreal) image, that I took while driving to work in Connecticut on a recent winter morning. An enormous red snail stood near the entrance to a rural garden shop, and several smaller ones were peeking from the windows. I didn't know what to make of it (or what it was *made of*): a bright red, giant creature, its color, size, and very nature oddly incongruous with the surroundings. Looking at the image later, I felt inspired.

To prepare for this composition I studied an orchestration manual on Japanese traditional instruments (written by Minoru Miki and translated by Marty Regan), met with Mrs. Kimura (who graciously demonstrated the instrument to me), listened to YouTube videos of koto performers and studied some scores. During preparation time I realized that koto, for me, was a little bit like a red snail: strange, alluring, not fully knowable. The work tonight is a musical and emotional response to the unusual sight and the challenge of writing for an instrument so interesting and so remote from my own culture.

Fading Beauty... (3) (2014) for shakuhachi, shamisen and koto by **Miyuki Ito**

***Hiroko Ohno** (painting, *Merzouga Sun and Moon*)

This is the third piece of the *Fading Beauty* series from my works. The first one is for small ensemble, the second for viola solo, and the third for Japanese instruments and cello. The title, *Fading Beauty*, refers to the Japanese aesthetics of the falling blossoms, whose beauty is fleeting. For example, Japanese temple bells are rung the second time only after the reverberation has faded away. In contrast, Western bells are generally rung regularly, without waiting for the reverberation to die out. According to Japanese aesthetics, one needs to be immersed in each reverberation. Based on this idea, I have inserted calculated bell sections at regular intervals.

After the bell sections, instrumental sections are merged with the reverberations. They are notated with quick passages, like a continuation of imaginary reverberations, the sounds of which might still be moving around in the air. Silence is also an important gesture in my piece. My idea of silence, which I call “colored silence,” also comes from this aesthetic, in particular from the reverberation of Japanese temple bells. I have collaborated with Japanese-style painter Hiroko Ohno several times. Her paintings are created with Japanese pigments, which produce subtle colors. They are linked to my musical colors.

***Hiroko Ohno** graduated from the MFA program in Nihonga (Japanese style painting) at Musashino Art University. She is a recipient of 1993 Meguro Gajoen Art Prize and 1986 Ryushi Kawabata Award. Her works in NYC were on view at *Implant* Art Gallery at UBS, Asian Contemporary Art Fair, NY, Red Dot Art Fair, NY, Desbrosses Gallery, Radio House Gallery, Artists Space, Columbia University, and at Bridge Art Fair in Miami. Ohno’s extensive exhibitions abroad include JM art Centre in Namibia, Manly Museum in Australia, San Francisco, and London, Honma Museum, and Setagaya Art Museum in Japan. Her works are in the collections of Tokyo University, Homma Museum, Keio University, and National Art Gallery of Namibia. A book of reproductions of her paintings was published by Kyuryudo in 1995. She moved from Tokyo to New York City in 2004.

***Full-Out Stillness* (2014) for shakuhachi, koto and cello by James Nyoraku Schlefer**

Life in New York City is often about the many extreme contrasts that one encounters on a regular basis. Ostentatious wealth on one street, poverty two blocks over; the mad dash to catch the subway, only to have it sit idle; noise and stillness. I find that my music reflects my environment and thus, the texture and energy of New York are part of my sound. The influence of 1960s rock and soul music, the music of my youth, is also evident in the faster sections, while the calm, quiet moments reflect my solitary shakuhachi practice.

***Forest Whispers* (2008) for shakuhachi and cello by Marty Regan**

Forest Whispers... is part of a continuing effort that began with a work of mine for shakuhachi and 21-string koto entitled *Song-Poem of the Eastern Clouds* (2001) to devise a notational system with the aim of imbuing my music with a distinctively Japanese aesthetic. The score is designed with an element of rhythmic indeterminacy and uses proportional notation to facilitate a flow of musical time based not on a fixed pulse or meter, but rather on the natural patterns of the human breath. In this piece, I attempted to seamlessly blend the two instruments in a way that emphasizes their similarities and potential correspondences by means of imitative gestures, resulting in a soundscape where imagined boundaries between the “East” and “West” become blurred and transcended.

***Honju* (1974) for shamisen by Minoru Miki (1930-2001)**

Honju is one of the most important pieces in the shamisen solo repertoire. Forty years after its composition one can still feel the music’s striking originality and energy, which was inspired by rapids created after a storm at Akiyoshi limestone cavern (the largest of its kind in East Asia) located in Yamaguchi Prefecture, Japan.

***Moment of Consonance* (2014) for shakuhachi, koto and cello by Noriyasu Tanaka**

The piece opens with a combination of koto and an ethnic metal instrument with clear sound. In the next section, koto and cello entwine around solo shakuhachi line, involving several small "spaces," and all major themes that dominate the whole piece are introduced. As various and fragmentary groups of sounds exposed in this section are transformed throughout the whole piece, they will configure this work while continuing to be developed and modified repeatedly. The title of the piece, "Moment of Consonance" means that unique timbres and possibilities for musical expressions of three different instruments are directed towards one new sound, while occasionally confronting each other. While composing this piece, the most important point for me was to pursue the possibility of musical expression as I imagined figures of natural sounds in my mind. At the same time, I tried to keep myself from being obsessive about ideas such as expressing a distinct "Western" or "Japanese" identity. I would like to express my gratitude to the three performers who will premiere my work today.

About the composers

Lyudmila German holds degrees from Brooklyn College, CUNY and the Manhattan School of Music. Lyudmila is a recipient of *Meet the Composer Grant* (1995), *Ivar Mikhaschhoff Grant for New Music* (2000), *Cantate Chamber Singers* (2004) award, and *Robert Helps Prize* (2009). Recent performances include: a premiere of *Gone* for tenor saxophone and electronics at Yamaha Hall, Nagoya, Japan (2007); *Reflections on Time and Being* for clarinet, viola, and piano by *Juventas* new music ensemble in Boston, MA, December 2008, Piano Sonata at Robert Helps Festival, Tampa, FL, (2009), as well as several performances of solo works in Ukraine and France (2010-11), and a premiere of *Four Seasons* for chamber orchestra in Ulianovsk, Russia (2013). Currently, Lyudmila is working on a one-act chamber opera, as well as on piano and piano-vocal music. She is an organist and music director at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Georgetown, CT, and a full-time mother of two. This is Lyudmila's first excursion into the world of Japanese instruments.

Miyuki Ito, a native of Nagoya, Japan, received her B.A. from Aichi University of the Arts, Japan, M.A. from the Manhattan School of Music, and D.M.A. from Columbia University, studying with Tristan Murail. She pursued research at IRCAM (Paris) with an artist grant from the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan. Her works have been performed at festivals and venues across the globe, including Centre Acanthes (France), ISCM (Hong Kong), Résonances (IRCAM), ICMC (Miami), SMC (Greece, Spain) and Re:New (Denmark). She has received commissions from Harmonia Opera Company (NY), Columbia Sinfonietta (NY), Tokyo Opera City (Japan), Taketoyo Opening Concert Hall Committee (Japan), Music From Japan (NY), Attack Theater (Pittsburg), Onix Ensemble (Mexico), Aichi Arts Center (Japan) and individual musicians. Her awards include the Nagoya Cultural Promotion Agency Prize (Japan), Japan Symphony Foundation Prize and Concorso di Composizione Franco Evangelisti 1st Prize (Rome). She had been a fellow at the Djerassi Artist Residency in California with an Oshita Fellowship and at CMMAS in Morelia (Mexico) with a support of the Japan Foundation. She currently teaches at Nagoya University of

Arts, Chiba Commerce University and Aichi University of the Arts in Japan. Ito is a co-founder and producer of the composer collectives *NymphéArt* and *JUMP*. She released *The Sands of Time*, focused on works with live electronics on ALCD80. *Réminiscence d'un ancien esprit* is published by Edizioni Suvini Zerboni (Italy). www.miyuki-ito.com

Marty Regan has composed over 60 works for traditional Japanese instruments and since 2002 has been affiliated with AURA-J, one of Japan's premiere performance ensembles of contemporary-traditional Japanese music. Widely regarded as the authoritative source on the subject and the only resource of its kind available in English, his translation of Minoru Miki's orchestration-instrumentation manual *Composing for Japanese Instruments* was published by the University of Rochester Press in 2008. His "Selected Works for Japanese Instruments" compact disc series is released by Navona Records and his music is published by Mother Earth Co, Ltd. He completed his Ph.D. in music with an emphasis in composition at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa in 2006 and is currently Associate Professor of Music at Texas A&M University. One of his newest works, a chamber opera entitled "The Memory Stone," was commissioned by the Houston Grand Opera and was premiered in April 2013 at the Asia Society Texas Center. URL: martyregan.com

Born in Tokyo, **Noriyasu Tanaka** graduated from Kunitachi College of Music, majoring in composition and instrumental performance. His works have been heard on NHK-FM and radio broadcasting in the United States and Korea. Furthermore, they have been presented in Japan and throughout the world, including at music festivals in Germany, Austria, France, Scandinavian countries, Korea, and Belgium. In 2006, he was invited to Musik & Museum Aspekte Salzburg, an international music festival in Salzburg, where 4 of his chamber works, including 2 premiers, were performed and highly acclaimed. Also, his work, "Ballade," commissioned by Masan Philharmonic Orchestra, was premiered received favorably at the Asia International Contemporary Music Festival in Masan, Korea. In February, 2013, his work "The Tri-Mode I" was premiered by *Ensemble United Berlin* in their Berlin concert. In October 2013, he was invited as a main guest composer to the 9th International Festival of Music and Technology (Audible Visions) in Morelia, Mexico, where his latest work, "Sparkling in the Space III" for guitar and electronics was premiered, and he was also invited to give a lecture on a topic "Electronics and Music," at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Collections of his chamber works can be heard on CDs titled "Noriyasu Tanaka Chamber Music Vol. 1", released in 1996, and "Noriyasu Tanaka Chamber Music Vol. 2", released in 2002, on VMM (Vienna Modern Masters) label, Austria. His latest CD, with representative chamber works, composed in 2001-2009, was released on ALM Record label in 2011. His music is published by Mother Earth Co. Ltd., Japan. Currently, Mr. Tanaka is a professor at the School of Music, Nagoya University of Arts, and a member of Japan Society for Contemporary Music, and Japan Federation of Composers Inc.

About the performers

James Nyoraku Schlefer is a Grand Master of the shakuhachi, and one of only a handful of non-Japanese artists to have achieved this rank. He has performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, Tanglewood, and BAM, as well as multiple venues across the country and in Japan, Indonesia, Brazil and Europe. He received the Shi-Han Master's license in 1998, a

second Shi-Han license in 2005, and was awarded the Dai-Shi-Han Grand Master's License in 2001. As a composer, Mr. Schlefer writes extensively for both Japanese and Western Instruments. He teaches shakuhachi at Columbia University, a broad spectrum of Western and World music courses at New York City Technical College (CUNY), and performs and lectures at colleges and universities throughout the United States. www.nyoraku.com

Koto/shamisen performer and singer, **Yoko Reikano Kimura** has concertized around the world. She has graduated from the Tokyo University of Arts and Music. She continued her studies at the NHK School for Young Professionals and the Institute of Traditional Japanese Music. Yoko received a scholarship from the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan. Her teachers include Kono Kameyama, Akiko Nishigata, and a Living National Treasure, Senko Yamabiko. Yoko received her stage name "Reikano" from Hiroko Nakanoshima VI and "Reiko Yamabiko" for her Kato-bushi shamisen playing. She is continuing her performances in Japan and teaching at the Institute of Traditional Japanese Music, an affiliate of Senzoku Gakuen College of Music. Yoko has won numerous awards including the First Prize at the prestigious 10th Kenjun Memorial National Koto Competition and at the Great Wall International Music Competition. She has appeared at NHK FM radio many times. In 2004 she performed "Shamisen concerto" at the National Olympic Memorial Center. In 2014 Yoko will be collaborating with Cassatt Quartet, Freimann Quartet and performing "Koto Concerto: Genji" with Urbana-Champaign based orchestra, the Prairie Ensemble. As a koto/ shamisen soloist and collaborator, Yoko has performed with many leading traditional Japanese performers and worked with Heiner Goebbels, the Wien Soristen Trio, Kyo-Shin-An Arts and many others. Yoko has performed in Poland, Switzerland, France, Korea, Israel, Italy, and South America.

Hikaru Tamaki concertizes regularly as a soloist and a chamber musician in the US and Japan. He served as the principal cellist of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and was a member of the Freimann String Quartet from 2001- 2013. Before joining the Philharmonic, he was an associate principal cellist of the Chicago Civic Orchestra and performed under the baton of Daniel Barenboim at Carnegie Hall. Solo performances with the Philharmonic have included the Dvorak Cello Concerto, Don Quixote and both Haydn concerti. Born in Kyoto, Japan, he studied with Noboru Kamimura and Peter Seidenberg. Studies in the United States began in 1994 at the Eastman School of Music, where he was named a George Eastman Scholar. He was awarded a bachelor of arts degree from Rice University and a master of music degree from Northwestern University, where his teachers were Paul Katz and Hans Jorgen Jensen. Hikaru was a prizewinner in the prestigious All Japan Viva Hall Cello Competition in 2000. In 2008 he released his first solo album, which includes the works of J.S. Bach and Toshiro Mayuzumi. In 2009, he began collaborations with his wife, Yoko Reikano Kimura (koto/shamisen) and they have given concerts and workshops at various cities in Japan and the US under the moniker Duo YUMENO. In 2011, they were awarded the Janet Latz Professional Development Fellowship in recognition of their duo activities.